

On the road: traffic and driving

A UK driving and traffic regulations

Note the collocations.

■ You must **give way** at a **give-way sign**. On a roundabout, traffic coming from your right **has the right of way** [is allowed to go before other traffic]. **Sounding/hooting/tooting your horn** is prohibited except in emergencies. **Jumping** [not stopping at] a **red light** is a serious offence. **Reckless driving** [very dangerous driving, without any care for others] is also a very serious offence.



■ **Drink-driving** may result in a heavy fine or imprisonment. You may be asked to take a **breathalyser** [instrument you breathe into to measure alcohol level] test. **Hit-and-run** [running over or into someone and not stopping] accidents are **extremely serious** and could result in a **ban** [removal of one's driving licence] for several years and/or imprisonment. Less serious offences may result in **penalty points** [negative points on your licence which are added up over time]. **On-the-spot fines** [given at the scene of the offence] may be issued for careless driving and other offences.

■ **Exhaust emissions** [waste gases produced by the vehicle] must meet government standards, and the car must be **roadworthy** [in a condition that it can be driven safely], which includes a minimum depth of **tyre tread** [the depth of the grooves in the tyre rubber].



B Traffic problems

Note the words in bold in these comments by people talking about driving problems they have experienced and other events on the road.

It was the rush hour, and there was a long **tailback** on the motorway. [line of slow or stopped traffic]

There was a **pile-up** [crash between several or many cars] involving ten cars, because of the fog, so the road was closed and we were **diverted** [directed away from our road] on to a narrow country lane.

I had stupidly parked in a **towaway zone** and came back to find my car had gone! [area where your car may be taken away if you park illegally]

I just parked for a few minutes outside the station, but when I came out my car had been **clamped**. [fitted with a metal device on the wheel to prevent it from moving]

I saw two men fighting next to their cars. I think it was a case of **road rage**. [anger or violence between drivers because of difficult driving conditions]

The road was wet and I **skidded** on a bend and almost crashed. [lost control of the steering]

There was a **head-on collision** [two vehicles hitting each other directly in the front] on the main road between here and the next village last night. Luckily, both cars had **air bags** and the drivers survived.

There was an accident at the junction between the A476 and the A53 this morning involving a lorry carrying a load of glue. Traffic has been stuck there for the last three hours. (Radio announcement)



Exercises

30.1 Fill the gaps in these sentences using words and phrases from the opposite page.

- 1 We can't park here; it's a zone.
- 2 There was a five-mile on the motorway because of road works.
- 3 Fog caused a number of, one of which involved 15 cars.
- 4 If it's a sign, you don't have to stop if the road is clear, but if it's a stop sign, then you must always stop.
- 5 Who has the at a corner in your country? Cars or pedestrians?
- 6 It was a accident, but the police have a description of the car.
- 7 The permitted level of is to be lowered in an attempt to reduce air pollution in big cities.
- 8 He was given a test and it was discovered he had consumed a huge amount of alcohol. He was charged with and fined £500.
- 9 In some countries drivers their just because they get frustrated. As a result, the city streets are incredibly noisy.

30.2 Respond to these comments as in the example, so that your response explains the meaning of the underlined words. Use words from the opposite page.

EXAMPLE A: I came out and saw a big metal thing on my wheels.

B: Oh, so your wheels had been clamped!

A: Yes. I had to pay £100.

- 1 A: As I drove round the corner there was some ice on the road and I lost control of the steering.
B: Oh, so
- 2 A: The two women were obviously having an argument about the way one of them had driven. Then suddenly they started hitting each other!
B: Oh, I guess it was a case of
A: Yes. It's happening more and more these days.
- 3 A: The policeman looked at my tyres and said they were illegal.
B: Oh, so you didn't have the minimum depth of
- 4 A: The road was closed. Two lorries had come straight at each other and crashed.
B: Oh, so it was a
- 5 A: The policeman fined me £100 there and then. I have to pay it within seven days.
B: Oh, really? I didn't know they could give
A: Yes. You have no choice. They just give it to you and you can't dispute it at the time.
- 6 A: The man at the garage said my car wasn't in a fit condition to be driven legally.
B: Oh, so it's not

30.3 What do you think the underlined expressions mean? Write their meaning in your own words. Use a dictionary if you cannot work out the meaning from context.



- 1 There were three separate accidents in the city centre during the rush hour and soon there was total gridlock. It took about two hours to clear.
- 2 I've spent six hours behind the wheel today, and now all I want to do is rest. I never want to see another motorway.
- 3 The police car made me pull over and they checked my lights.
- 4 I had a minor bump yesterday. It wasn't serious, but one of my lights got smashed.
- 5 My car conked out on the motorway and I had to ring for assistance. It cost me £50.
- 6 He's a bit of a back-seat driver, so don't be surprised if he criticises your driving.